



# Safety on Floating Ice Sheets

U.S. Army Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory, Hanover, New Hampshire

For many of us in northern climates, working or playing on the frozen surface of a river or lake is part of winter. Knowing how to do so safely can be a matter of life or death. This article presents general, common-sense precautionary measures that should be followed when you plan to be on a floating freshwater ice cover. Since it cannot cover every ice condition you may encounter, your judgment is critical.

## Remember:

Only you are responsible for your own safety!

There are four things to focus on when planning an outing on the ice: your physical condition, your clothing, your equipment, and your procedures.

## Physical Condition

Anyone who goes out on the ice should be in reasonably good condition and be able to sustain periods of intense exertion if an emergency arises—either falling through the ice themselves or rescuing someone who does. Being able to swim, or at least being comfortable staying afloat is important in an emergency and can reduce the chances for panic.

## Clothing

Naturally you should choose clothing that provides protection from low air temperatures, wind, and precipitation while at the same time allowing you mobility. But in addition, when you select clothing, keep in mind the possibility of falling through the ice. Clothing that would severely restrict your ability to swim or to stay afloat is not a good choice. Hip boots or waders should never be worn, as they can fill with water and restrict movement

while adding weight. A personal flotation device should be worn. This can be a vest or jacket, either inflatable or naturally buoyant.

## Equipment

Include items for testing and measuring the ice thickness, as well as items for rescue or self-rescue. In the first category are a heavy ice chisel, an ice drill or auger, a measuring tape or stick that can be hooked under the bottom edge of the ice in an auger hole, and possibly a perforated ladle for cleaning ice out of the auger holes. In addition to the PFD, bring a rope or rescue throw bag containing a rope that floats. Ice rescue picks sold for ice fishermen are an excellent idea. They thread through your jacket sleeves like children's mittens and are immediately available in an emergency for pulling yourself out of the water into the ice.

## Procedures

- Never go out on an ice cover alone, and never go out on the ice if there is any question of its safety.
- While you are planning the outing, obtain the record of air temperature for the past several days and continue observing air temperatures while the ice will be used to support loads.
- Always let someone know of your plans and when you will return.
- When you arrive at the water's edge, visually survey the ice. Look for open water areas, and look for signs of recent changes in water levels: ice sloping down from the bank because the water
- dropped, or wet areas on the ice because the water rose and flooded areas of the ice that couldn't float because it was frozen to the bottom or the banks. (If the ice is snow-covered, look for wet areas in the snow.)
- Listen for loud cracks or booms coming from the ice. In a river this can mean the ice is about to break up or move; on a lake larger than several acres such noises may be harmless responses to thermal expansion and contraction.
- Look for an easy point of access to the ice, free of cracks or piled, broken ice.
- If you are taking a vehicle or other equipment on the ice, go out on foot first. Vigorously probe ahead of yourself with the ice chisel. If the chisel ever goes through, carefully turn around and retrace your steps back to shore, and try again some other day.
- Near shore, listen for hollow sounds while probing. Ice sloping down from the bank may have air space underneath. This is not safe; ice must be floating on the water to support loads.
- After getting on the ice, others in the group should follow in the leader's steps, but stay at least 10 feet apart.
- Only after you have learned the characteristics of the ice cover should any vehicle be taken on the ice.



**Kickapoo  
Environmental Office**

1107 Goldfinch Rd.  
Horton, KS 66439

Phone: 785-486-2601  
Fax: 785-486-2445

**We're on the Web**

[http://ktik-nsn.gov/  
KickapooEnvironmentalProtection.  
htm](http://ktik-nsn.gov/KickapooEnvironmentalProtection.htm)

## Greetings from our new Environmental Worker, Myron Ford

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*My name is Myron Ford and I am a member of the Ihanktowan Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. My position with the Kickapoo Tribe will be as the Solid Waste Coordinator. I have been living in Lawrence, Kansas for the past five years, while earning degrees in Environmental Science and American Indian Studies at Haskell Indian Nations University. I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of twin girls into the family. My hobbies include chess, poker, camping, rafting, hiking, and climbing. I enjoy spending as much time outside as possible. I look forward to working with and getting to know the people of the Kickapoo Nation.*

### Public Survey on Waste Management

There is still time to drop off your public survey to the Kickapoo Environmental Office. If you did not receive a survey, you can stop the Kickapoo Environmental Office for a new one. A drawing for 2 Wal-Mart Gift Cards will be held and the winning numbers will be announced in the March 2011 Green Clan. The opinion of every tribal member is needed and every response to the survey is valuable and will help us make improvements!

### CASH FOR JUNKERS

The Kickapoo Environmental Office is starting a new program to remove abandoned or junk cars from yards and properties located on the Kickapoo Reservation. You will receive fair market value plus \$50 bonus incentive from the K.E.O. The bonus cash is limited to the first 20 cars, so don't wait. Contact the Kickapoo Environmental Office if your interested.

## A Better Place for Pharmacy Waste

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Drain disposal of medication is no longer recommended due to its negative impact on aquatic life. Two goals are first, to promote safer homes through elimination of stockpiled medication; and second, to educate citizens not to drain dispose their medications but to use an environmental preferred method of disposal.

Medicine cabinets filled with excess or expired prescriptions or over-the-counter medications can pose a threat for substance abuse among young children and teens.

Flushing these medications can cause contamination to Kansas aquatic environments and is not recommended. Proper disposal of excess or expired medication can prevent abuse and protect valuable Kansas water quality.

The Kickapoo Tribe In Kansas currently has no collection point for waste medications. Residents are encouraged to use the approved "kitty litter/coffee grounds" method.

Follow the simple steps listed below to safely dispose of prescription and over-the-counter medication.

1. Crush or dissolve pills in water, coffee or another liquid.
2. Make a paste of the dissolved pills or liquid medication by adding it to kitty litter or coffee grounds.
3. Put the paste in a closed container such as a small plastic sour cream container or coffee can.
4. Dispose of the closed container in the trash.
5. Make sure any personal markings are removed from prescription bottles and recycle them if possible.

\*These steps to safe disposal are recommendations from the Kickapoo Environmental Office and suggested by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and are detailed in a guidance document available at <http://www.kdheks.gov/waste/guidance>.